
Promising Practice Fact Sheet – Workforce Development ESSENTIAL SKILLS PROGRAM at COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF DENVER - Colorado

Program

Description: Combines 4-month work readiness and certificate program in high demand occupation with paid internships (Employ America).; features a comprehensive “whole life” approach with peer support groups and low staff-to-student ratio.

Target Population: 70% TANF, others low income, including some GED level students. The program is targeted to individuals who are unemployed or underemployed due to a lack of vocational training or work experience.

Goal: Focus of program was meeting participation targets by helping students transition from the crisis that dominates their lives to a performance orientation that is more likely to lead to success.

Cost: \$600,000 per year for training for 150 students/year (\$2500 per student/year).

Evidence: Included in Best Practices study
http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/PDFs/family_support/vocedtanfbr1.pdf

Caseload Data: 150 students/year

Assessment: Screened and assessed by academic advisors and staff

Services Overview:

- Combines 4-month work readiness and vocational certificate program in high demand occupations with paid internships (paid for by Employ America).
- Coursework is divided into a “workplace core” and a “vocational core.”
- The workplace core consists of 35 hours a week of soft skills and work-readiness instruction.
- To earn an Essential Skills certificate, students must take a variety of courses that are pertinent to their field.
- Additional class time is devoted to topics relating to personal development, establishing positive work habits, resume writing and interviewing techniques.
- The vocational core requires that students spend about 15 hours per week in the classroom during the following three months in which they are also completing a paid internship.
- Employers work with the Essential Skills program by:
 - Providing input and resources for program enhancement
 - Offering expertise on workplace competencies
 - Hiring graduates of the Essential Skills Program for entry-level job opportunities
 - Providing feedback on new hire performance to CCD staff
 - Offering fair wages and compensation to graduates

Eligibility: TANF and low income

Findings:

- Nearly 90% of students met their participation requirement;

- 76% completed program;
- Approximately 50% got unsubsidized employment.

Implications for Policy Makers and Program Developers to Consider:

- Program includes a comprehensive “whole life” approach, cohort structure creating peer support groups, low staff to student ratio.
- Staff also supervises internships closely.
- Internships are focused primarily with employers that have open positions.
- This combination of graduated training and closely supervised work experience that is linked to the training and to the labor market addresses, participation, skills and knowledge gains and work experience development.
- CCD's Workplace Learning Project continues to provide internship job coaching and retention skills for the first year after Essential Skills graduates are placed into jobs.